

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
MCT-01 HA-05 CA-01 /068 W
-----006714 161335Z /23

R 161258Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4201
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 04220

THIS CABLE IS TRANSMITTED FOR AMCONSUL BELFAST

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, PDEV, UK EI

SUBJECT: BRITISH-IRISH DISPUTE ON SUPPRESSION OF
TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. AS VIEWED FROM BELFAST, AND WITHOUT HAVING SEEN
LONDON AND DUBLIN REPORTING ON THE SUBJECT, IT APPEARS
THAT THE MUTUAL BRITISH AND IRISH INTEREST IN SUPPRESS-
ING PROVISIONAL IRA TERRORISM HAS BECOME ENTANGLED WITH
THE BROADER ISSUE OF NORTHERN IRELAND'S POLITICAL FUTURE
AND EACH SIDE IS IRRITATED WITH THE TACTICS OF THE OTHER

2. CROSS-BORDER SECURITY COOPERATION: SECURITY FORCES
ARE PLEASED WITH IRISH COOPERATION AGAINST PIRA IN THE
BORDER AREA. INFORMATION IS EXCHANGED REGULARLY, AND
FORCES SOMETIMES WORK TOGETHER TACTICALLY ON SPECIFIC
INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE BORDER. BRITISH FORCES WOULD
LIKE A DIRECT LINK BETWEEN THE TWO ARMIES, RATHER THAN
HAVING TO GO THROUGH THE POLICE, BUT THEY RECOGNIZE THE
REPUBLIC'S POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES. BUT THERE IS
INCREASING FRUSTRATION HERE OVER PIRA USE OF THE
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INTERIOR OF THE REPUBLIC FOR ORGANIZATION, R & R,
TRAINING, SUPPLIES, HAVEN AND MEDICAL CARE. WE AVOID
PROBING INTO INTELLIGENCE MATTERS, BUT GATHER THAT THE
UK HAS HARD INTELLIGENCE TO THIS EFFECT--ALTHOUGH PER-
HAPS NOT EVIDENCE THAT COULD BE TAKEN TO COURT.

3. THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE TELLS US THAT IN

DECEMBER THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN DUBLIN ORALLY BRIEFED A SENIOR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL ON THIS SUBJECT. HE REPORTEDLY SUMMARIZED A GOOD DEAL OF INFORMATION THAT HAD BEEN PASSED TO THE IRISH POLICE PIECEMEAL. HE EXPECTED IT TO BE TRANSMITTED TO THE IRISH GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH THE IRISH OFFICIAL DID NOT TAKE NOTES. APPARENTLY THE OFFICIAL DID NOT RECORD THE AMBASSADOR'S APPROACH, AND HIS GOVERNMENT HAS PUBLICLY AND INDIGNANTLY DENIED HAVING HEARD OF THIS SUBJECT BEFORE MASON RAISED IT HIMSELF.

4. MUTUAL IRRITATION: AFTER THE FEBRUARY 17 LAMON OUTRAGE, MASON HELD OFF UNTIL MARCH 6 A STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE ON SECURITY. HE HOPED TEMPERS WOULD COOL BUT WAS STILL UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FROM INDIGNANT UNIONISTS AND CONSERVATIVES. THE NIO OFFICIAL WHO DRAFTED THE SPEECH TOLD US IT WAS INTENDED TO REAFFIRM THE BASIC POLICY LINE IN AN UNPROVOCATIVE WAY, BUT AT THE SAME TIME TO SET RIGHT PRIME MINISTER LYNCH'S NARROW INTERPRETATION OF CROSS-BORDER SECURITY INCIDENTS (I.E., LESS THAN TWO PERCENT OF TERRORIST INCIDENTS IN THE NORTH INVOLVE THE BORDER). MASON'S SPEECH HAS BEEN INTERPRETED BY MANY IN THE REPUBLIC AND HERE AS AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE LYNCH'S GOVERNMENT THE SCAPEGOAT FOR HIS OWN FAILURE IN THE SECURITY AREA. THE CRITICISM SEEMS JUSTIFIED TO THE EXTENT THAT MASON PROBABLY SPOKE

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MORE SHARPLY THAN HE WOULD HAVE HAD HE NOT BEEN UNDER UNIONIST AND TORY PRESSURE. AFTER ALL, HE WANTS TO EXTEND COOPERATION WITH THE REPUBLIC, AND A QUIET APPROACH WOULD LIKELY BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN SHOUTING IN PUBLIC.

5. EXTRADITION: ANOTHER POINT WHICH REEMERGED AT ISSUE WAS THE EXTRADITION OF PERSONS IN THE REPUBLIC CHARGED WITH TERRORIST OFFENSES IN THE NORTH. FOR WHAT ARE PRESUMABLY STRONG POLITICAL REASONS, THE REPUBLIC HAS REFUSED AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL SUCH EXTRADITION WHEN IRA MEMBERSHIP IS INVOLVED. THE NIO MAINTAINS THAT SOME 20 PERSONS IN THE SOUTH SHOULD BE EXTRADITED, AND THAT EVERY AVENUE MUST BE TRIED TO GET THEM CONDEMNED. THE NIO IS UNABLE TO USE THE PROCEDURE ESTABLISHED IN 1976 FOR TRYING A PERSON FOR AN OFFENSE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER ON THE BASIS OF EVIDENCE FROM THAT SIDE SINCE THE OFFENSES IN QUESTION WOULD BE RETROACTIVE.

6. THE WIDER QUESTION: ALSO CONTRIBUTING TO THE DISPUTE IS THE IRRITATION HERE WITH LYNCH'S ASSERTION

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HA-05 MCT-01 CA-01 /068 W
-----006685 161335Z /23

R 161258Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4202
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 04220

THAT THE UK SHOULD PUBLICLY FAVOR THE RESTORATION OF A UNITED IRELAND BY CONSENT, AND WITHDRAW ITS COMMITMENT THAT NI WILL REMAIN IN THE UK UNLESS A MAJORITY OF ITS PEOPLE VOTE OTHERWISE. ONE GOOD NIO SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGES MODERATION IN MOST OF LYNCH'S LANGUAGE BUT DOES NOT SEE WHY THE UK SHOULD BE LESS FRANK THAN HE IN ASSERTING ITS VIEWS. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE FEELING THAT NI IS PART OF THE UK BECAUSE OF ITS PEOPLE'S WISHES, AND THAT IF THE REPUBLIC WANTS UNITY, IT SHOULD WOO THESE PEOPLE. OFFICIALS UNDERSTAND THE "GUARDIAN'S" POINT (MARCH 14 EDITORIAL) THAT "IT IS SILLY TO PRETEND THAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND ARE FOREIGN STATES JUST LIKE ANY OTHERS," ALTHOUGH UNIONISTS PROFESS TO PRETEND JUST THAT. BUT IN THE PRESENT PEEVISH ATMOSPHERE THEY--AND PRESUMABLY MASON--MIGHT ENJOY TELLING LYNCH TO BUG OFF.

7. SO WHAT? THIS DISPUTE SEEMS SILLY, AND UNWORTHY OF EITHER SIDE. EACH APPEARS MORE INTENT ON WINNING ITS POINT PUBLICLY THAN LISTENING TO THE OTHER. THE EXTREMISTS OF BOTH SIDES IN NI ARE ENCOURAGED, AND
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PETULANCE IS NOT LIKELY TO GAIN MUCH. FROM HERE, HMG'S
ATTENTION APPEARS FIXED ON ELECTIONS, AND IT IS NOT
GOING TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE ON A MATTER AS PERIPHERAL
AS NORTHERN IRELAND. WHAT WE CAN HOPE FOR IS
CONTINUING PRESSURE AGAINST THE TERRORISTS, AND THAT
BOTH WILL SEE BEYOND THE PRESENT SHARP WORDS TO THE
MUTUAL INTEREST IN COOPERATION. STOUT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTES, COUNTERINSURGENCY, TERRORISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LONDON04220
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780117-0402
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780361/aaaabzhd.tel
Line Count: 183
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 481e4bc6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3311337
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITISH-IRISH DISPUTE ON SUPPRESSION OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, PDEV, UK, EI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/481e4bc6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014